



House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural
Resources, and Water
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon

Date: February 8, 2024

Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Hartman and Owens, and Members of the Committee:

This testimony is submitted by the Oregon Wildlife Coalition, a coalition of wildlife conservation groups working proactively and collaboratively to advocate for policies that are science based and humane and reflect the state's conservation values. Members of the coalition are Cascadia Wildlands, Center for Biological Diversity, Humane Society of the United States, Humane Voters Oregon, Oregon Wild, Bird Alliance of Oregon (formerly Portland Audubon), Western Environmental Law Center, and Willamette Riverkeeper.

The Oregon Wildlife Coalition is neutral on House Bill 4061.

We appreciate that the bill would encourage measures to prevent elk damage from occurring, and that the -2 amendments would specifically direct inclusion of “[n]onlethal deterrence activities” in the definition of “best preventative measures.” However, we are concerned that the definition would ultimately be up to the Oregon Department of Agriculture, without any direction as to how nonlethal measures should be balanced against lethal measures. At a minimum, the bill should prioritize nonlethal measures and require formal consultation with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife on what constitutes “best preventive measures.”

We are also concerned that this pilot program will take Oregon farther down a slippery slope of creating expectations of compensation for the ordinary consequences of living with wildlife. In our view, those expectations will tend to reduce tolerance for wildlife instead of promoting a culture of coexistence, which is what we believe Oregon should be working to create instead.

Finally, the bill does not address the interaction of the proposed compensation program and special tags that landowners already receive (“damage tags”) to address damage caused by elk on private property. Landowners receiving compensation for elk damage and elk-damage prevention should not also receive special tags to kill the elk. Otherwise, the public will be paying them twice – with both money and loss of wildlife.

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Thank you for considering our concerns.

Sincerely,
The Oregon Wildlife Coalition

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